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ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The decline in business activity during the last quarter of 1937 was almost unprecedented in its sharpness. Industrial production dropped 24 percent during the three-month period - a greater drop than that during any entire year of the past depression. Curtailments in construction and transportation were also severe.

Production of "nondurable" consumer goods (excluding automobiles and furniture) had by December dropped nearly to the "subsistence" level of 1934-35, but leveled off in January and probably will not decline much further. The decline in the "durable goods" group, however, continued through January. February may show a further decline in this field, and at best no marked improvement is to be expected.

The reduction of payrolls in the durable goods industries will continue to affect adversely the total volume of consumer purchasing power. On the other hand, the low level of activity in the consumer goods industries will provide no stimulus to expansion in the capital goods field.

Nearly two million men had lost their jobs by December, as a result of this decline in business activity. What it means in terms of unemployment, no one knows. Often, when a man is laid off, not only he but also other members of his family are added to the number seeking work. The census taken in November indicated that there were almost eleven million people totally unemployed. Taking account of the sharp seasonal decline in agricultural employment, as well as of the continued declines in industrial employment, the number totally unemployed by December was probably not far from twelve million, of whom only about two million were working on government relief projects. January employment figures may be expected to show a further decline of more than a million.

Sharp as this decline in employment has been, it reflects only a part of the curtailment in business activity. Average hours worked per week in manufacturing industries fell from about 40 at the beginning of 1937 to below 35 at the end of the year. This work-spreading has saved the jobs of about a million workers in manufacturing industries alone. Many of these men owe their jobs to union agreements which have provided for shorter regular hours and for reducing the work-week before laying off men in periods of declining activity.

Hourly earnings had not fallen significantly by December. Union agreements were an important factor in preventing wage-cutting. Unless business conditions improve, however, there will be more and more insistent pressure toward reduction of wages.

A concerted anti-union campaign is already in the making. The difficulties of meeting this campaign will be immeasurably increased if the downward trend of employment and business activity is not reversed.

Business interests are blaming the recession on the undistributed profits tax and urging the repeal of tax and labor legislation in order to "give business a chance." Labor organizations should clearly recognize that neither the undistributed profits tax nor the Labor Relations Act had any part in bringing on the present recession, and that their repeal will not help the situation. The "give business a chance" philosophy, if it should be accepted by the Administration, would strengthen the impending anti-union campaign and have a disastrous effect on labor standards generally.

Within the framework of the existing economy, a policy of renewed government spending furnishes substantially the only hope of checking the recession before it develops into a major depression. Consumer purchasing power must be maintained if another major catastrophe is to be averted. The new and increasing army of unemployed must be put to work. If private industry cannot use them, the government must.

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LEGISLATIVE SHACKLES FOR LABOR

At the moment, the demand that labor unions be brought under stringent federal controls has temporarily subsided. Business is now preoccupied with the onerous problems of the new depression. Comparative calm on the labor front has made the question of employee relations less pressing. For the present, business is more concerned with wheeling privileges for itself than imposing legislative shackles on labor.

The situation, however, is a passing one. Any resurgence of labor militancy will find the reactionary pack again in full cry. The charges of "irresponsibility" will recur. The Girdlers, Hoffmans, et al will again shout "anarchy," and insist upon labor union regulation as the sole alternative to national disaster. Their ranting will be echoed in learned editorials, arguing that the "unwise exercise" of labor's rights be curbed, and that labor be compelled to assume new responsibilities to match the new prestige and power it has acquired in recent years.

The employer counter-attack will come at a time when labor is most vulnerable. Jurisdictional disputes bound to arise from the C.I.O.-A.F.L. conflict will lend credence, in the public eye, to claims that labor organizations are irresponsible and must be regulated in the public interest. Internal conflict

will not only add weight to charges of irresponsibility but will seriously weaken labor lobbies in national and state legislatures where the battle will be fought.

What type of regulatory legislation will be proposed? For the most part, the demand for increased responsibility and regulation of labor organizations has this far been couched in vague terms, with few concrete suggestions as to the type of measure required. There seems to be a nostalgic yearning for a bill drawn along the lines of the British Trade Disputes Act, but there is no unanimity and little certainty that this would have the desired effects. The truth of the matter is that when most editorial writers and business spokesmen hold forth on the need for restrictive legislation they have nothing specific in mind. They are searching for some effective method of proscribing labor's activities. They seek some subtly worded measure which can be passed without much objection - a measure constructed loosely enough to permit judicial interpretations which will completely hamstring labor.

Ironically enough, the most frequently mentioned measure of the regulatory type, and potentially the most dangerous, is one originally proposed by labor. In its pioneering days, the American Federation of Labor fought for trade union incorporation because the legal recognition implicit in a charter of incorporation would remove trade unions from the operation of conspiracy laws then in effect in a number of states. There were other reasons. Adolph Strasse of the cigarmakers pleaded before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in 1883, that incorporation would "give our organization more stability, and in that manner we shall be able to avoid strikes by perhaps settling with our employers when otherwise we should be unable to do so, because when our employers know that we are legally recognized that will exercise such moral force upon them that they cannot avoid recognizing us themselves." Other union leaders, McGuire of the carpenters and John Jarrett of the iron and steel workers, testified that incorporation would measurably improve the position of organized labor.

In 1886, largely as a result of union pressure, a law "to legalize the incorporation of national trade unions" was enacted; but no union ever sought the benefits it theoretically conferred upon them. The records of American Federation of Labor conventions after 1886 hardly mention the incorporation law until 1901 when President Gompers warned affiliated unions against it. "Some years ago the Federal Congress passed a law for the incorporation of our trade unions," Gompers said. Beyond question the advocates of the bill really believed that they were doing the organized workers a real service; but at the time, and since, we have repeatedly warned our fellow-unionists to refrain from seeking the so-called protection of that law." Subsequently, Gompers said of the measure, "we will not submit to this new snare for labor's despoilment."

Behind labor's complete reversal of policy lay Britain's Taff-Vale decision which had held "that a registered trade union was subject to a civil suit for damages, was responsible collectively for the acts of its officers as individuals, and that its funds were liable to attachment to satisfy claims." Unfortunate experiences with the courts in the closing decades of the nineteenth century convinced most American labor leaders that, once incorporated, labor unions would be subject to constant persecution at the hands of unfriendly judges, and would suffer the fate of the Taff-Vale defendants.

Adolph Strasser, once an ardent supporter of incorporation, told a Senate committee in 1904 that, "As the judiciary is now constituted, with life tenure, largely selected from the attorneys of corporations and other large, wealthy institutions, their natural inclinations are against labor, and the working

people would get the worst of the battle, and for that reason it is against their interests to be incorporated." "We somewhat hesitate," he added, "to hand our funds over to these powers.... When a judge is against you by education or surroundings, he will always find a reason and arguments to confirm him in his decision."

The Taff-Vale decision had, of course, an opposite effect on employers. Compulsory incorporation rapidly became the cardinal demand of the open-shoppers. Formerly they had opposed it. Now they declared, "Legislation should be had to provide for the incorporation of trade unions just as we have it for forming other corporations or trusts, and self-constituted bodies founded to coerce employers would have no status under the law and would become conspiracies, where they failed to comply with the requirements to incorporate."

The years have not changed their attitude. While some have become rather skeptical of the efficacy of such legislation in insuring industrial peace, the majority still favor it. "Organized labor," said Hearst's American editorially several months ago, "should be compelled to incorporate so that it can be held responsible for the execution of its agreements." Wall Street's Commercial and Financial Chronicle reaffirmed its old position: "Corporate, or at least quasi-corporate responsibility must be established."

In proportion as employers have become more insistent in urging compulsory incorporation, so labor has become more adamant in its opposition. "No proposal in this country," Matthew Woll wrote recently, "has so nearly approached the spirit of fascism." Trade unions have come to see additional disadvantages in incorporation. Briefly summarized they are:

1. Incorporation would make it possible for outside agents working within the union to tie up union funds by court actions based on flimsy charges of deviation from the charter of incorporation's provisions.
2. Incorporation would weaken the union's control and discipline over its members since the courts would have the right to review all admissions and expulsions. That this is an important consideration is evidenced by the fact that the New York Stock Exchange and several important employers' organizations remain unincorporated specifically for reasons of discipline.
3. Incorporation would make union rules too rigid to meet changing situations. Under incorporated status, an amendment to the charter would be required for every change in rules.

It is also pointed out that unions are already legally responsible and sunble, and that far from increasing responsibility, incorporation is a device designed to limit liability.

Whether any concerted effort will be made to secure enactment of compulsory incorporation legislation in the immediate future it is difficult to say. What is certain, however, is that passage of any such measure would be catastrophic for labor. It would seriously limit its flexibility and freedom of movement. Worse, it would put employers in a position where they could tie up union funds and completely paralyze union organization at crucial points. In effect, it would reduce labor to complete impotence. Labor is aware of this. The danger is that division in its ranks may prevent it from using its awareness to good advantage.

NORTH-SOUTH DIFFERENTIALS IN COST OF LIVING

It is a popular belief that "it costs less to live in the South." Precisely ~~what do~~ people mean when they make ~~this~~ statement? Sometimes they mean that Southern wage earners are accustomed to lower standards of living than are those in the North. Sometimes they mean that the same standard of living - the same amount of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc. - can be purchased for less in the South than in the North.

Southern standards of living are in fact lower than those in other parts of the country. Housing may be taken as an example. A study of housing conditions in 64 cities by the Department of Commerce, in 1934, showed that, out of every 100 Southern families studied, 37 lacked bathtubs, 30 lacked indoor toilets, and 25 lacked electric lights. For every 100 families studied in other sections of the country, however, 18 lacked bathtubs, 12 lacked indoor toilets, and 4 lacked electric lights.

Studies of wage earners' expenditures by the Department of Labor likewise show a lower standard of living in the South. They show that, out of every 100 Southern white families studied, 37 did not spend enough money on food to get the minimum requirements for bodily health - in other words, they were being slowly starved and their resistance to disease lowered. In other sections of the country 23 out of every 100 white families studied spent less than the minimum requirements on food. This study dealt with the white families only, and it is known that Negro families in the South subsist on an even lower standard than the whites.

Frequently, however, the statement that it costs less to live in the South is made with the purpose of justifying lower wages in the South. For such a purpose, the existence of lower standards of living there is an irrelevant fact. To use existing differences in standards of living as a reason for perpetuating existing differences in wages is to give the Southern worker less because up to now he has received less. For such a purpose the only question which merits any consideration is whether it does in fact cost less to purchase any given standard of living in the South than in other sections of the country.

Even if living costs are lower in the South, it does not follow that lower wages there are justified. A plant located in the South sells in a national market at prices determined by factors that are nation-wide. Its ability to pay wages equal to those paid by its Northern competitors is in no way dependent on the cost of living in the South. If the cost of living were in fact lower there it would merely mean that Southern industry is reaping the advantage of it in the form of lower payrolls and a greater margin of profit. Why the benefits of lower living costs should go to the Southern manufacturer, rather than the Southern wage earner, has never been explained.

Since there is so much talk, however, about the "lower cost of living in the South," let us see what the facts are. Several studies have been made which cast some light upon the question. These studies show what it would cost wage earners to live in different communities if they lived at the same standard.

The first of these studies was made by the National Industrial Conference Board, an employers' research organization. They surveyed costs in 69 cities for February 1935, in 54 cities for March 1936, and in a third survey covered 59 cities for March 1937. The procedure they followed was to draw up a standard budget deemed sufficient to purchase a satisfactory standard of living. Average prices charged for these goods were calculated for each of the cities

studied. The total cost of the budget in each of the cities surveyed was thus determined. These surveys showed that in February 1935 costs in the Southern cities were 2.4% below the national average; in March 1936, 2.8% below; and in March 1937, 4.0% below.

A similar study made by the Works Progress Administration covered 59 cities for March 1935. The Southern cities showed living costs 3.3% below the general average.

These two studies, carefully conducted, taking everything into account - even the fact that less fuel but more refrigeration is required in the warm climate of the South - indicate that Southern living costs average roughly 3% below the nation-wide average. Even this small differential, however, is open to question.

In all three of the W.I.C.B. studies the only items for which any significant North-South difference appears are rent and fuel. For other items costs in the South are at least as high and sometimes higher. According to these three studies, rents in Southern cities are anywhere from 10 to 14 percent lower than the nation-wide average. The Conference Board indicates quite clearly, however, that these differences may reflect differences in standards of housing. The only common characteristic of the houses surveyed was that they had a bath, four to six rooms, and were occupied by wage earners. Some of these houses were fairly new, some were old and with few conveniences. In the light of the generally inferior housing conditions in the South disclosed by the Department of Commerce survey, mentioned above, it is clear that a good part, if not all, of the North-South differences shown by the survey reflect differences in standards of housing rather than differences in the cost of the same standard of housing. If we rule out the rental differences, however, the Conference Board's studies fail to show any appreciable difference in living costs at all.

Another important point that is commonly overlooked is that the 3% difference is an average for a large number of cities. Thus, the highest cost city in the W.P.A. study was Washington, D.C., while the next to the lowest was Wichita, Kansas. Living costs in Richmond were considerably higher than in Indianapolis. The W.P.A. figures indicate quite clearly that there was as much variation between cities in one region as there was between regions. The Conference Board figures are not available for individual cities, but the Board itself suggests the same conclusion: that variations between cities in the same region are often greater than differences between regions.

Another study, made by Professor William Ogburn (Social Forces, December 1935), reached the conclusion that no measurable differences in living costs between the regions exist.

In the face of these facts, the statement that it costs less to live in the South must be labelled as a myth. It is a myth perpetuated and industriously circulated by Southern manufacturers and their representatives in Congress to defeat uniform wage legislation for the whole country and maintain their rate of profit at the expense of the standard of living of the Southern workers.

A bitter comment upon this propaganda was made by the Atlanta District Council of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, which called for a 20% reduction in the salaries of Southern Senators and Representatives because of sectional differences in living expenses. "These same Southern Senators and Representatives now are unpatriotically accepting the same remuneration as those elected from the Northern states, to wit: \$10,000 per year. This would appear to be causing an uncalled-for drain of many thousands of dollars annually upon the Federal Treasury."

THE UNEMPLOYMENT CENSUS

The National Unemployment Census, taken in November 1937, indicated that there were nearly 11 million totally unemployed persons in the United States, of which only about two million were working on WPA or similar projects. This unexpectedly large figure clearly revealed the need for larger relief appropriations. As a result, the conservative press immediately opened an attack on the reliability of the Census. The New York Herald Tribune, for instance, described the figure as "virtually meaningless." It is important, therefore, to determine the reliability of the Unemployment Census figure.

Administrator Biggers reported that about 7,800,000 persons filled in Unemployment Report Cards indicating that they were totally unemployed or working on WPA or similar work relief projects. A house-to-house "test census" in about 1800 sample areas scattered over the country indicated that in these areas 28 percent of those who were unemployed failed to register. It was estimated, therefore, that the total number of persons unemployed, including those on work relief, was 10,870,000.

This figure is much larger than other current estimates. The American Federation of Labor estimate of the total number of unemployed in November was 8,476,000; the National Industrial Conference Board's estimate was only 7,585,000. Both of these estimates are based on the 1930 census of unemployment, with allowance for the change since that time in total employment and the change in the total working population due to population growth. There is, however, reason to believe that there have been important factors other than population growth which have affected the total number of persons who are working or seeking work. The N.I.C.B. in releasing its November figures commented as follows:

"The increase of nearly five million in the labor force since 1929, resulting from population growth, is taken into account, but persons not ordinarily classified as gainful workers who have been forced to seek employment because of the depression or special circumstances are not included. To the extent that such persons have joined the unemployed or have supplanted former gainful workers, these estimates may represent an understatement of the unemployment situation." (Conference Board Business Survey, Jan. 24, 1938)

It has been recognized for some time that during a depression the size of the total labor force - that is, the total number of persons who are employed or seeking employment - is abnormally increased. After the head of a family has been unemployed for a long period of time, or has had his earnings reduced below the point necessary to maintain the family standard of living, other members of the family who are not normally employed will seek employment. These additional workers may remain unemployed or they may find jobs, thus replacing other workers. In either case they represent an addition to the total labor force. There can be no certainty, moreover, that these persons will withdraw from the labor market with a return of relative prosperity. The proportion of the adult population which is working or seeking work has been increasing steadily for several decades, and the effect of a severe depression may merely serve to accelerate this trend.

The administrator attempted to minimize the significance of the unexpectedly large total indicated by the Census. He suggested that persons who do not usually work but who are forced to look for jobs because of economic necessity should not be regarded as unemployed. In his letter to the President he said:

"The unemployed may be divided into two classes. One class represents those regular workers for wages who always work, when work is available, regardless of their immediate economic status. Work to them is not only a means of livelihood

but a habit of life. These unemployed are clearly a part of the regular labor market.

"There is also a second group consisting of those who are not regular workers for wages, such as housewives who seek wage jobs only when the family breadwinner is idle; daughters and sons who take jobs through choice rather than necessity; unpaid family workers on farms and in family stores, who seek wage jobs only when family income needs supplementing; retired people who, because savings have become depleted, decide to enter the labor market again. To this class unemployment is a status depending on their current inclinations and temporary economic conditions.

"This second group, made up of occasional workers for wages, might not take the trouble to respond to a voluntary registration but might readily be reminded to relate to a census enumerator their current desire to work....

"Considering all these factors, we do not claim provable accuracy for any one figure. The true number of those who considered themselves totally unemployed, able to work and wanting work, in our opinion, lies between 7,822,912, the number who responded to the registration, and 10,870,000, the number indicated by the enumerative census."

Conservatives have made the Administrator's statement the principal basis for their attack. They have interpreted "somewhere between 7,822,912 and 10,870,000" to mean "not more than 8,000,000 - and probably less." The arguments advanced by the Administrator in the attempt to pare down the 10,870,000 estimate, however, are open to two serious criticisms:

(1) While it may be true that a good many persons registered who did not fit the Administrator's idea of a "truly" unemployed person, there seems no reason to believe that such persons would be any more likely to report themselves as unemployed to the enumerator than they would to send in cards in the voluntary registration. The enumerative test census conformed much more closely to the type of procedure generally recognized by statisticians to be reliable than did the voluntary registration.

(2) Why should persons who are forced to seek work by economic necessity be considered any less truly unemployed than those who regularly or habitually work for pay? If such persons were merely temporary additions to the labor force, who would withdraw from the labor market after a short period of time, there would be reason for considering them separately, though not as any less "truly" unemployed. But it has already been indicated that such additions to the labor force may be more or less permanent.

Such arguments as those advanced by the Administrator should not be permitted to distort the facts nor to obscure their significance. The Unemployment Census indicated that there were in November, eleven million persons in the United States who were not working and who wanted work, according to their own statement. How many of these were persons who regularly or habitually work; how many were forced to seek work by economic necessity; how many did not really need the income a job would yield and were not seriously seeking work; how many, on the other hand, were at the point of desperation - these are questions that cannot be answered on the basis of data now available. They are important questions, but the seriousness of the unemployment situation, as indicated by the Census, is not materially diminished, whatever the answers.

THE MECHANICAL COTTON PICKER AND SHARECROPPER ORGANIZATION

The mechanical cotton picker now being tested by the Rust brothers is, as many people will be surprised to know, by no means a brand-new idea. On the contrary, it is a device that people have been working on for the last seventy-five years. The first patent for such a device was granted in 1850, and since that year over 900 patents for mechanical appliances for cotton harvesting have gone through the United States Patent Office.

The chief reasons for this diligence have been, just as in the case of all machine innovations, the desire to lessen the necessary labor effort and to cut costs. Despite the low price of cotton picking (it ranges between sixty cents and one dollar per one hundred pounds), the sharp competition between cotton and other fibres, and between domestic and foreign cotton has resulted in continual efforts to cut costs still lower so as to buttress the margin of profit.

In all this zeal to lower costs, little heed is paid to the income of cotton farmhands. The cotton region is notorious for the low income levels enjoyed by sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Today annual incomes average, at best, about \$200 per family. The question arises: Will the machine depress this standard still further?

A significant trend in recent years has been the development of cottonfield workers' organization. The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, the largest of all these organizations, claimed 40,000 members at its recent convention which has just been held. It has been estimated that there are at present about 60,000 members in all the various sharecropper and tenant farmer organizations now merged into section 4 of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, affiliated with the Committee for Industrial Organization. What is the probable effect of the mechanical cottonpicker, assuming a successful one can be developed, on the future of such unionization?

The Rust brothers' machine may not prove to be thoroughly satisfactory. This, however, will not mean that no machine will meet the test. If our machine civilization is any criterion, it is fairly certain that ultimately some device will be perfected for mechanical cotton harvesting. At best, there is a respite for only a few years, perhaps a decade.

The introduction of machinery has traditionally been the cause of great dissatisfaction among workers. The history of the working class movement is replete with examples of machine wrecking, ranging in nature from the Luddite riots to sabotage, limitation of output, and other such polite forms.

Labor has been alarmed at the great inroads of the machine for reasons that have been fairly obvious. The fear has been widespread, and frequently realized that the introduction of machinery would occasion large-scale unemployment among workers in the trades affected. Look at the glass-bottle blowers, at the high level of technological unemployment today! There are illustrations aplenty to prove this contention to the hilt. Followers of the orthodox economy may make fine distinctions between long-run and short-run effects, but technological unemployment is too stark a reality to be waved aside.

Labor has also objected to the introduction of machinery on the grounds that this tends to create a reduction in the skill requisite for the various crafts and trades. The tendency has been to substitute semi-skilled or unskilled labor for skilled craftsmen after machines have been introduced. Such reduction in status is not opposed only on this simple ground; it is known that this tendency means wage reductions for the craftsmen.

Of course, the introduction of machinery has brighter aspects. It brings about a greater diversity and quantity of goods for consumers, and ultimately increases the demand for labor by stimulating consumer demands. Moreover, the onward march of the machine is too determined to be halted by any groups, even were such a procedure socially sanctioned. That last observation disregards the question of the wisdom of such a course.

The effect of the introduction of machinery is to create a homogeneity of labor. This quite frequently results in building up labor solidarity and, hence, union sentiment. A case in point is the rapid growth of the United Automobile Workers once the organization got started. Machines discourage the rise of "aristocrats of labor." Were all other conditions equal, to be highly hypothetical, the result of mechanization would be to stimulate trade union growth.

The machine of the Rust brothers, despite its great newspaper publicity, is not the machine the cotton landlords have been praying for. Not that it does not show a fair degree of efficiency - it does. The sal fact is that human labor is so cheap in Dixie that a mechanical harvester would have to be almost miraculous to cut costs still lower.

A mechanical harvester, no matter how great its effectiveness, could not eliminate the need for hand labor. Rather, it has been estimated that fifty percent of the labor would still remain to be done manually, the preparing, planting, cultivating, chopping and hoeing of the cotton plant. All these processes are arduous, and require much labor. The harvester itself would be of use only at such times as the bolls are ready for picking. It is for the manual tasks that the cotton landlord prefers cheap woman and child labor. Hence, the mechanical picker would be useful only for about 40 days of the year. The owner, however, would have to pay the overhead costs of this machine all year 'round. This would be economical only if the cost of hand picking were considerably higher than the cost of mechanical harvesting.

A second objection to the present machines is that they are not so efficient as hand labor. Present models pick up impurities and unripened bolls, all of which materially reduce the value of the cotton harvested. In addition, special appliances will be required by the cotton gins to handle this type of cotton crop. All this adds to the overhead costs of cotton growing.

The National Research Project of the W.P.A., in a brochure entitled "Mechanical Cotton Picker", gives the cost of cotton harvesting by the present type of Rust brothers machine as \$1.65 per hundred pounds of cotton picked. Future machines, it is expected, will reduce this price materially, perhaps to as little as 65 cents per one hundred pounds. At present, however, the \$1.65 cost of the machine picking compares very unfavorable with the present rate for manual labor.

There are other factors to be considered, however. First, there is a possibility of mechanizing the preharvest operations. There is talk of such machinery being available, waiting only for some solution for the problem of disposing of the peak labor requirement of harvesting. The mechanical picker may very well answer the latter problem.

Improvements are quite conceivable for present types of gins to make them adaptable to machine-picked cotton. This would dispose of the other major problem remaining.

As far as cost is concerned, it must be borne in mind that there is a tendency for pickers' wages to rise, due to unionization and the growing determination among the croppers to ease their exploitation by the cotton landlords. If the price of hand picking should rise materially, there will be inducement enough for cotton landlords to embark upon widespread mechanization.

There is, then, a future for the mechanical picker. When that day comes, what of the sharecroppers and tenant farmers?

Is the harvesting machine, despite the good social intentions of the Rust brothers, a Frankenstein whose function will be to intensify the insecurity of the cotton croppers? Will it add to their misery and act as a bar to organization against the ills of which they so justly complain today?

The cotton fields are one of the greatest users of woman and child labor. It has been well known that only by the labor of whole families can the bodies and souls of King Cotton's slaves be kept together. The abolition of woman and child labor in the cotton fields, in order to be of benefit to the croppers, must be accompanied by steep increases in men's wages.

Cotton landlords complain that they cannot pay these wages, and hence they will bitterly resist any attempt at wage increases. The alternative seems to be that the introduction of the machine will mean curtailment of the labor force and the incomes of cropper families will thereby be greatly reduced. The prospects for a great increase in the demand for cotton - the only possibility for the retention of the present labor force - are very dark, at present indications.

Another possibility is that the use of machinery will make it unnecessary to hire whole families. Instead, the cotton farmers will need only a small force of year-'round laborers, and will rely upon transient laborers for their peak requirements. In other words, cotton agriculture will assume the same labor relationships so typical of what, tobacco and vegetable farming. This form of organization of the labor force will mean the final break-up of the plantation. Whether or not this means the flowering of capitalist agriculture depends on how widely the cooperative farm idea, on the style of the Delta Cooperative, extends.

Without question, this means the dislocation of great numbers of cropper families. Unless there is an unprecedented revival of our economy, instead of the downward trend that seems to be evident today, this will occasion a tremendous dislocation of our industrial system. The question is, just how much more elastic is the system, and how many new workers can it absorb. Present indications seem to point to a pessimistic conclusion. If that is so, the impact of this migration of cropper families to industrial areas will create a tremendous problem of unemployment.

These developments are fraught with significance as far as unionization is concerned. It means that, added to the open terrorism now in vogue in the cotton belt that is used against union members, there is the possibility that the sharpened competition for employment will add a subtle economic terrorism. As a matter of fact, the struggle for employment will make direct terrorism unnecessary.

This situation would sooner or later give impetus to new union organization and old union reorganization. Should the machine have caused the drastic reduction of woman and child labor, the men would of necessity have to band together for living wages. Recent years have shown that migratory agricultural laborers are just as organizable as resident workers.

Not only is this a possibility: it is a dire necessity. Organization as such is the only immediate solution of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers. It is their only real weapon against the vicious form that their exploitation by the cotton landlords takes. The machine will force them to organize on a basis similar to their urban brothers.

Ultimately, however, the problem of the sharecroppers can be solved only by the abolition of capitalist agriculture. The only way that can be done effectively is by the spread of the cooperative farm movement. In this respect, it is encouraging to see the close cooperation between the Delta Cooperative and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. That way lies the only ray of hope for the future.

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